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## **THE RUSSIAN MILITARY AND THE 1995 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: A PRIMER**

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### **Conclusions and General Observations:**

- Russian Minister of Defense Pavel Grachev recently announced that the Ministry of Defense (MOD) is selecting and sponsoring 123 active duty and retired military men to run for office in the 17 December Duma elections. Grachev is betting on the ability of his own candidates-in-uniform to win a significant share of the 450 seats in the most powerful chamber of Russia's Parliament.
- Two years ago Grachev's ministry opposed the idea of military members running for legislative office. However, faced with a deteriorating Duma-MOD relationship, Grachev's effort seems designed first to put a military check on this antagonist situation (which has resulted in budget cuts and no one championing military interests), and second to offset predictions by military sociologists indicating that parties hostile to MOD (the Communists, Congress of Russian Communities, LDPR, and Russia's Democratic Choice) are expected to make major gains in the Duma.
- If Grachev's intent is to create a unified military bloc in the Duma, the move seems a matter of too little and too late. Grachev's military candidates will join other new legislators, who probably will include retired or active duty military officers (Lebed, Gromov, Vorobyev?) that have vehemently opposed MOD policy on critical issues, such as the unpopular war in Chechnya; or who were part of the coup attempt against reformists (Achalov, Varrenikov). The Duma may easily find itself with pro-Grachev and anti-Grachev military blocs, which certainly will not strengthen military unity. Military interests may also reflect the diverse concerns of the branches, arms, and ranks of the armed forces.
- MOD is also politically active on other fronts, to include a half-hour program "Army Magazine" (regularly aired on Russian National Television) that recently endorsed the political-patriotic bloc "We Serve Russia."
- Finally, Grachev has warned senior subordinates that he will judge their performance on the number of military men elected to the Duma. This gambit may have been tacitly accepted by President Yeltsin to protect the interests of part of the power apparatus, yet hardly reflects a coherent electoral program. For example, before Grachev's move, Prime Minister Chernomyrdin had already recruited his own charismatic military figure

(General Rokhlin). Grachev himself will not be among the candidates, having recently declined nomination from several groups to run in electoral districts.

### **Background.**

The Russian military inherited a tradition of political mobilization and party-guided participation in the system of soviets from the defunct Soviet regime. During Perestroika elements of the senior military found themselves drawn deeply into domestic politics, culminating in internal divisions during the August Coup. Post-Communist Russia has a deeply divided military that also has been drawn into domestic politics as a protector of corporate interests of the officer corps. Military professionalism has pushed part of the officer corps toward an apolitical stance. But the crisis of the officer corps has also moved another portion towards deeper, partisan political involvement. In a political climate favoring nationalist-populist and authoritarian parties, men with shoulder boards (*pogony*) [officers] and red pant stripes (*lampasy*) [generals] have become regular fixtures in the electoral camps of the various parties. Even Defense Minister Pavel Grachev noted in February 1995 that "leaders of many parties and movements have been actively visiting me".

In the wake of the September-October 1993 crisis between the President and the Parliament that culminated in the shelling of the White House with the overt intervention of the military into domestic politics, the Ministry of Defense did not recommend that servicemen run for office for the December 1993 parliamentary elections. As a result, Parliament got very few military members. In MOD's view, the current Parliament does not understand and sincerely take to heart the problems of the military and the state's defense capability. These included the budget and the war in Chechnya. The majority in Parliament has been hostile to the Minister of Defense and reluctant to fund military programs as requested. Grachev believes that Russia needs a cadre of military specialists in the Parliament who can prepare and substantiate various proposals on military problems, and persuade deputies to support the Ministry's programs.

The Russian parliamentary elections in December 1995 appear to offer fertile ground for the military's involvement in politics. The election is expected to be a free-for-all with over 50 parties and blocs fielding electoral lists and 30,000 military and civilian candidates running for 450 seats. Active duty military personnel can run and serve under Russian law if they take a leave of absence from the military, and many from the military are now actively seeking to change the composition of Parliament by their participation in the election process. One of the most public indicators of this change was the retirement of the commander of Russia's 14th Army in Moldova, General-Lieutenant Alexander Lebed, and his political alliance with Yuri Skokov's Congress of Russian Communities. According to Lebed, his decision was only one in a series of political moves by Defense Minister Grachev who earlier this year summoned district commanders and senior generals and told them: "I have never called on you to run for the Duma, but now I shall judge your service and performance by the number of deputies elected from the Armed Forces. I have a list of 50 people who are to get into the Duma from the army."

- Serving military deputies have been pointed in their criticisms of the entire context of civil-military relations, some supporting Grachev's viewpoint and some violently opposing it. These critics are, however, just as diverse in their party affiliations and oppositional stance. They include: Colonel Sergey Yushenkov (Russia's Choice), Head of the Defense Committee of the Duma; General-Major Aleksandr Piskunov, Defense Committee of the Duma; and Major Evgenyy Loginov (LDPR), Defense Committee of the Duma. Among the other prominent military men in the current Duma are: General-Lieutenant Viktor Ustinov, and General-Major Nikolay Stolyarov, both of the Duma Geopolitics Committee; Colonel General Dmitriy Volkongonov, who also serves as a national security advisor to the president; and Colonel- General German Titov (Russia's second cosmonaut) elected to the Duma from the Kolomenskiy Okrug.

**Instructions from Defense Minister Grachev:** In September Grachev instructed Lieutenant General Zdorikov (Chief of the Main Directorate on Personnel Policy and an MOD political worker) to organize the pre-election pursuit of deputies seats. Zdorikov, writing in *Red Star* on 8 September, asked "what kind of ideology does the Russian army need now?" He answered by noting that patriotic education "called for by the people" was needed. Soon thereafter, Russian National Television ran the Ministry of Defense's usual half-hour program, "Army Magazine" [*Armeiyskiy magazin*]. It included a section devoted to "We Serve Russia," a political bloc of those "who served, are serving and will serve Russia." The program recommended the bloc to all patriots. This program, which is aimed at the general public, demonstrates just how far the Ministry is willing to go in supporting a political bloc sympathetic to the Ministry.

According to another report, Zdorikov held a conference to establish a military electoral campaign. He noted that "it is necessary to establish links with persons of authority in regions and oblasts and make sure that our candidates are elected to the Duma." He also reportedly outlined the axes along which the military should find their way into the Duma:

What is necessary is to establish personal contacts between the command and administration heads, to put our men on all electoral commissions, to explain to servicemen and the population that the military are not "hawks" or "the party of war", to supervise and strictly adhere to the dates of election campaigning, and also concerted and coordinated actions by working groups in charge of elections in order to support our candidates.

In late September Grachev was quoted by the OMRI news service with more instructions:

**MILITARY TO FIELD OWN CANDIDATES FOR DUMA.** Arguing that the current State Duma has not done enough to help the military, Defense Minister Pavel Grachev announced that the army will nominate 123 servicemen, 23 of them generals, to run for parliament in single-member constituencies-- Laura Belin, OMRI, Inc.

Grachev said this decision was made by the defense collegium based on advice from military district commanders who, along with MOD, made a detailed analysis of the Duma's performance over the past two years.

**The Military's Electoral Law.** The Russian electoral law draws a fine line between the right of soldiers to stand for office and take part in the political process and the need to keep politics out of military units. These rules provide some degree of protection for servicemen from political activists, give servicemen guidance on their own political ambitions, and attempt to provide some safeguard against command pressure to support one or another candidate. *Red Star* announced the following rules for servicemen to observe:

1. A serviceman can be elected a deputy to Parliament. He can nominate himself or an action group can collect signatures on his behalf. The serviceman must then request a leave of absence to take part in the elections. Leave of absence must be granted to a serviceman who has registered as a deputy candidate. The cost of leave, traveling costs, and so forth are funded by the federal budget. If elected, his service to the armed forces is suspended.
2. The Central Electoral commissions's instructions advise military unit commanders to issue their own order prescribing the time and place for the collection of signatures supporting a candidate based on the actual conditions of service, which precludes upsetting the plan of the day or combat training. Signatures may be collected at a given time in premises adjoining a checkpoint, in the soldiers' mess, or in the club, but this is the commander's decision. However, the venue must be accessible to servicemen and efforts made in advance to give information to the local press regarding the procedures involved. A serviceman on furlough may listen to any candidate he wishes. Any pressure from the commander is a violation of the law, and this is the only time a serviceman can go "over the head" of a commander and complain directly to the district electoral commission or the court if it infringes on his rights. Most important, **no matter how well known or high ranking a prospective deputy may be, he may not have access to the territory of a military unit.**
3. The signature collectors must only carry signature sheets and the federal lists of their electoral blocs, and must not have any propaganda information. No political agitation in any form is allowed on the territory of military units and it is the commanders responsibility to ensure observance of the law.
4. A commander must ensure that servicemen have access to all official information relating to the State Duma elections, that is information published in the state press organs or originating from the Central Electoral Commission and district electoral commissions. Regarding TV, commanders must allow servicemen to view all the candidates or none at all.(FBIS 1 Sept p 25)

In their free time and off the military base, however, members of the military may take part in campaign activities.

**The Myth of the Unified Military Bloc.** A recent poll by military sociologists and General Staff analysts indicated that the military in its totality (that is, military members, their families, veterans, workers in the military-industrial complex, etc.) account for 40 million of the possible 110 million potential voters in this December's elections. Therefore, according to this line of thinking, the attitudes of the military as a bloc vote are extremely important for the current and future regimes. This notion of the military as a unified bloc is unrealistic, however, due to the evident cleavages within this larger community, which is divided by interests, values, and attitudes.

In late September, the campaign for local elections in Volgograd became a test-case for the military's role as an electoral force. In the period preceding the elections, General-Lieutenant Lev Rokhlin, a corps commander stationed in the Volgograd region, senior commander in Chechnya, and a Duma candidate for Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin's "Russia Is Our Home," appeared frequently on national television explaining why military candidates were running as a bloc in Volgograd. Marching bands and drill teams represented the current army, while other footage recalled the heroic Red Army counter-offensive of November 1942 which swept the Germans from the Volga. The local government headed by Mayor Yurii Chekov, who had left "Russia Is Our Home" before the election, was accused of not addressing the problems of the military personnel living in the city. The election, however, went to local members of Evgeny Zyuganov's Communist Party of the Russian Federation, which swept 20 of 24 seats. The military carried none.

**Military Candidates:** At this stage it is very difficult to gauge the full extent of the field of military candidates that will run for the Duma in December. However, a partial and selective list of the major political parties which have sought the affiliation of senior military/MOD personnel [active duty and retired] is suggestive of the trend.

Prime Minister Chernomyrdin's party "Russia is our Home": Dr. Andrey Kokoshin (active, First Deputy Minister of Defense), General-Lieutenant Lev Rokhlin (active, 8th corps commander).

"Communist Party of the Russian Federation," headed by Gennady Zyuganov: General Varrenikov (retired, former ground forces commander, implicated in the 1991 coup attempt, co-leader of the All-Russia Officers Assembly); Colonel-General Albert Makashov (retired, former commander of Ural Military District and leader of the unsuccessful assault on Ostankino television complex in October 1993).

"For The Fatherland" Party, which includes the chairman of the board of the Russian Union of Afghanistan Veterans, Frants Klintsevich: General Podkolzin (active, commander of all airborne forces, member of the Afghan movement). The "For the Fatherland" bloc also claims to have recruited Admiral Eduard Baltin (active, commander of the Black Sea Fleet).

Russian Unionists and Industrialists-Labor Union: Admiral Igor Kasatonov (active, First Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Russia's Navy, former Black Sea Fleet commander).

This is the proposed title of the party chaired by Mikhail Shmakov and supported by Arcadi Volskii of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Enterprises. The latter includes among his "friends" the Russian Union of Reserve Officers, the Generals and Admirals Club, the Foundation for the Adaptation and Defense of Servicemen of Soldiers of the Fatherland, and the Association of Veterans of Intelligence, among others.

Liberal Democratic Party of Russia: Major Evgenyy Loginov (active, airborne) and current member of Duma Defense Committee; General-Major Viktor Filatov (retired, former editor of *The Military-Historical Journal*); and Marshal Dmitriy Yazov (retired, Minister of Defense under Gorbachev and member of the GchPU of August 1991).

Yuriy Skokov's "Congress of Russian Communities": General-Lieutenant Alexander Lebed (retired, airborne, former commander of the 14th Army in Pridniester who openly confronted and opposed Grachev over the past year).

Duma-96 Alliance ticket: Colonel General Georgiy Kondratyev (retired, former deputy defense minister in charge of peace operations).

Nikolay Ryzhkov's "Power to the People": LTC Terekhov (retired, head of the Russian Officers Union, jailed for his involvement in the events of October 1993).

General-Colonel V. A. Achalov (retired, former airborne commander, VP Rutskoy's Minister of Defense in 1993, and co-leader of the All-Russia Officers Assembly) is completing negotiations to join with General-Major Alexander Sterligov (retired, former KGB, member of the Russian National Choice) on creating a single election bloc (the Union of Patriots), although earlier both had planned to join Nicholi Ryzhkov's group; the Russian National Assembly formed the nucleus of the congress, which also had representation from the Black Hundred and Union of Russian Officers.

"My Fatherland" party: General-Colonel Boris Gromov (retired, former ground forces commander in Afghanistan, former Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, former Deputy Minister of Defense, and now military advisor to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) initially supported Speaker Ivan Rybkin, but now is the leading candidate of the Party.

National Salvation Front: General Tarasov (retired, tank forces)

Derzhava [Power]: General Alexander Rutskoy (retired, pilot, former Russian Vice-President who was jailed for his involvement in the events of October 1993) candidate for President. Colonel V. Alksnis (retired, former "Black Colonel", head of the National Committee movement and supporter of anti-Yeltsin movements)- Derzhava initially, but left the party around 12 September due to accusations that Rutskoy was being supported by "dubious businessmen", i.e. the mafia.

Russian Democratic Reforms Movement (RDRM): Marshal Yevgeniy Shaposhnikov (retired, former defense minister)- said earlier to be on the list but now says he will not run and will remain at the head of the Rosvooruzheniye company.

Gaidar's "Russia's Choice:" Colonel General Edward Vorobyev (retired, former deputy Ground Force chief, retired after refusing to take charge in Chechnya, represents the "Military for Democracy" movement).

"Agrarian Party" of Russia, led by Mikhail Lapshin: General of the Army Makmut Gareev (retired, General Staff, currently President of the Academy of Military Science). The Agrarian Party includes the All-Russian Committee of War and Labor Veterans of the Armed Forces, Law Enforcement elements, and the Agrarian Union of Officers in Reserve and Military men-Agricultural Producers of Russia (claimed by some to number 35 million, which appears to be an exaggeration).

Russian National Congress: General-Major Nikolai Stolyarov (active or retired status unknown, air force, State Duma Deputy).

Major General Vitaliy Shenin (retired)- president of the Agrarian Union of Reserve Officers and Military Agricultural Producers

KEDR, an ecological movement party: Lyubov Lymar (mother of a soldier, represents Soldiers Mothers of Russia).

RADM Valeriy Aleksin (active, Chief Navigator of Russian Main Naval Staff, independent candidate endorsed by Union of Naval Veterans)

Party of Economic Freedom: Cosmonaut Vladimir Kovalenok (General-Colonel, active or retired status unknown, currently chief of the Zhukovskiy Air Force Academy).

Russian National Movement: (no officer listed)- included the Union of Officers for the Resurrection of the Fatherland, the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, subdivisions of the Union of Afghan Servicemen, and the Union of Cossack Troops. They reject the idea of Russia as a secular state and believe the church and state must be indivisible.

All Russian Conference of Cossack Unions (no officers listed but involves paramilitary organizations)- supported by Yeltsin aide Nikolai [?] Yegorov.

## **Recommendations:**

While it is still too early to offer concrete recommendations due to several outstanding questions (did Yeltsin order Grachev to get the military involved? What is the strategy behind active duty military generals supporting different parties? etc.), several preliminary ones come to mind:

Civil-military relations in Russia are unfolding in an atmosphere of economic crisis, weak democratic institutions, ongoing ethno-national instability within Russia and the near abroad, and overt cleavages within the military itself. Consequently, the West needs to pay close attention to the military's role in December's Parliamentary elections. A specific Russian politico-military culture may emerge that differs greatly from the Soviet

past and that of the West. Moreover, the military's role in the Duma campaign could undermine the legitimacy of the electoral process in Western eyes by brokering praetorianism as a threat to democracy; and by putting additional strain on relations already taunt by existing disagreements over policies in Bosnia and NATO plans for enlargement.

Nevertheless, Russian-Western relations will best be served if the West refrains from immediate negative reactions, continuing to work with President Yeltsin as well as the new legislators. There is no reason to believe (unless Zhirinovsky gains control of the Duma) that the new majority of legislative members, including military members, will have an overt anti-Western ideology. However, the new legislature is likely to be very suspicious of the West, making it essential that we maintain open lines of communications during a vital transition period leading up to the June Presidential elections and beyond. The following table, constructed by military sociologists from the Leningrad Military District, is indicative of the attitudes in August 1995 during this transition period, and indicates the various lines of political interest among the military:

<b>Party/Movent (Party ldr, % of mil for this candidate in Aug '95)</b>	<b>sen off</b>	<b>jr of</b>	<b>warrants</b>	<b>sdrs</b>
CPRF (Zyuganov 14.1)	21.9	0.0	0.0	9
Cong of Russ Communities (Skokov not mentioned)	16	12.2	15	0.0
Our Home is Russia (Chernomyrdin 9.9)	4	4	0.0	0.0
LDPR (Zhirinovsky 15.8)	16.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Yabloko (Yavlinsky 14.5)	0.0	10	10	6
PRUA (?)	0.0	0.0	10	0.0
Russ Dem Choice (Gaidar 5.2)	0.0	0.0	0.0	6
Vote only for military	29.2	25	22	12
Won't vote	32.4	38	40	25

The West must become increasingly tolerant of military involvement in the Russian political process in this transition process, and sensitive to the budgetary and morale crises facing military leaders.



The West should remain committed to the de-militarization of Russian society as a critical component in the struggle for democracy and economic development, and to military professionalism as the principle behind a competent and transformed military. This electoral experiment, at odds with Western concepts of the apolitical, professional military of a democratic polity, may have a capital impact on both of these processes.